1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

CHAPTER TWO

TRUMAÍ SUBSISTENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Vital Statistics

162 The population of the Trumaí village in 1938 was 43. This figure includes the 3 foreign women in residence and excludes those few Trumaí who were living with other groups. There were 17 men, 16 women, and 10 pre-pubescent children, of whom 8 were male and only 2 were female. [737] Due to the previously mentioned capture and forced marriage of Trumaí women, the average age of females seems to have been considerably [163] greater than that of males. Two men were considered by the Trumaí as old, while four women were placed in that category. This disparity of age undoubtedly had an influence on the Trumaí birth rate.

165 Infant mortality seems to have been high, and Quain was of the 849 opinion that it was further aggravated by abortion and infanticide. The fact that there were eight male children and but two girls suggests that infanticide must have been practiced only upon females. Quain's notes, however, give no indication that this was the fact. Pulmonary diseases 164 have devastated all the groups of the upper Xingú, but the drop in the 161 Trumaí population from 43 in 1938 to 25 in 1948 is probably not paralleled in the other villages during that time.

Village and Gardens

361 The Trumaí settlement was located a scant half-mile from a lagoon 133 that opened directly upon the east shore of the Kuluene just a few miles away. The mouth of the lagoon was narrow, but it broadened out into a lake of moderate size with many small bays and was ringed with [36] swamps. Proximity to the river made insects a continual nuisance during the rainy season. The Kamayurá village, located near the sandy beaches of a lagoon lined with *buriti* palms, was relatively free of insects.

361 The village consisted of four houses and another under construction. Between the houses and the surrounding forest lay an area of weeds and low underbrush into which refuse was thrown. The ground within the ring of houses was kept comparatively free of weeds and litter. The village "plaza" was about 200 feet wide. In the center were the log [231] bench and fireplace of the men's gathering place. Nearby was a conical wicker cage in which the village harpy eagle was kept for its feathers, which were used in ceremonies.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

often gathered together, and at times all of the women of a house would work together in *piquí* collecting. Parties of boys and men sometimes picked up the fruit, and a man often went gathering with his wife to protect her from possible enemies, especially if there had been recent threats or omens. He took his bow and arrows, and frequently did not help in carrying the fruit back to the village. The *piquí* was brought to the village in basket containers, and then made into a variety of dishes.

Guava (*waruwaru*) grows wild in the forest, ripening a short time before *piquí* does, but extending into the season of the latter. Quain believed it to be a valuable vitamin C supplement to the diet, but it was a far less important food than *piquí*. Men participated little in guava collecting, although they accompanied their wives for sociability and protection. Quain described these connubial gathering expeditions as being largely pleasant jaunts through the wood. Children often went out for the fruit, which they brought back to the village strung on straws.

The water lily from which salt was made was another important item gathered during the period of Quain's residence among the Trumaí. The water lilies were collected in the Trumaí lagoon, and the complete salt-making process was carried on there. Each Trumaí built a rack over the waters of the lagoon. The lilies were pulled up, spread out on the rack to dry, and later burned. The ashes were sifted to obtain the salt. Quain did not mention any women's salt racks, but the women prepared their own supply of salt, too. Quain saw salt-making only in the early part of September, although it is possible that it occurred prior to this time as well. However, salt was not made after the middle of September, due to the rains and the exigencies of planting.

Ants were eaten by the Trumaí, and, according to an informant, by all groups in the area. A little boy demonstrated the correct way to consume them when he joyously brought in a fat one, plucked off its abdomen and swallowed it. Quain was told that later in the season the women and children would go out and collect them in large quantities. Other insects were in heavy demand for feeding the harpy eagle and other pet birds. Crickets were considered especially good for this purpose, and the boys made great sport of shooting these insects with their miniature bows and arrows.

A few other wild foods were eaten, but these were relatively insignificant. Among them was the fruit of the *awa'o* palm. Another fruit called *lamux*, resembling the crabapple in taste and superficial appearance, had a gelatinous interior. An unnamed plant is described by Quain as resembling grass, but having a quality like algae. It was eaten only in times of a manioc shortage. *Kamu's* is a parasitic plant that looks and tastes like the date. The *atoh* is a berry that tastes like the chokecherry.

Fift's and *tawasi*, the fish poisons, were gathered in the locale. The gathering and preparation of *tawasi* boughs was a cooperative venture.